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ABSTRACT

Three papers address the competency based teacher education (CBTE) movement, particularly as it relates to teachers of the visually handicapped. In the fist paper, I. Holman and G. Scholl review some of the activities related to CBTE in regular, special, and visually handicapped education to determine current status of the field, to identify major issues and problems, and to suggest a possible solution. Described is the Michigan Project, a 3 year project to improve the quality of services to visually handicapped students thought improved teacher education programs. A second paper by A. Corn addresses five issues in the CBTE movement including the need for determinations to be made regarding the criteria for mastery tasks for different levels of instruction. A final paper by L. Albright generates a list of future competencies that might be required for the teacher of the visually handicapped in the twenty-first century and stresses the need for continual revision of competencies to reflect the changing needs of the field. (SB)

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Problems and Issues in the Teacher Competency Movement

Challenge of Assessment

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Competencies for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped:

Background, Issues and Current Developments

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Introduction

Through the years our society has held certain expectations of teachers and has defined what constitutes their competence. During the early days of our educational history, moral behavior and ability to maintain a tidy classroom were paramount; in addition, strict rules regarding personal life styles were stipulated by employers. For example, in the late 1800s, a list of rules, such as the following, was presented to the beginning teacher:

> 1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys, and trim wicks. Wash windows once each week.
>
> 2. Each teacher will bring in a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.
>
> 3. Make pen nibs carefully. You may whittle nibs to your individual tastes.
>
> 4. Men teachers will be given one evening off each week for courting purposes, or two evenings off a week if they go regularly to church.
>
> 5. After ten hours in school, the teacher should spend the remaining time reading the Bible and other good books.
>
> 6. All teachers are encouraged to take complete baths with soap at least every week, and change underclothing frequently to avoid offending others.
>
> 7. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
>
> 8. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.

9. Any teacher who smokes Spanish cigars, uses liquor in any form, or frequents pool and public halls or gets shaved in a barber shop, will give good reason to suspect his worth, intentions, integrity and honesty.

10. The teacher who has performed his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of five cents per day in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

(Blackhurst & Berdine, 1981)

Through the years attitudes and expectations of society toward teachers have changed. As the world has become more complicated the expectations have become more demanding. Today there is considerable interest in and concern about the performance or competence of the teacher. Administrators seek measures of competence to make decisions regarding hiring and firing; supervisors evaluate teachers on the success of the instructional procedures they employ in the classroom; parents often measure the competence of teachers on their success in teaching what they themselves have failed to teach at home; students want teachers to adjust to their needs, interests, and various learning styles; and the general public wants teachers to prepare students adequately for the world of work. The problem arises in that each group stresses and seeks a different behavior or characteristic to define an effective teacher according to their individual biases. There is no universal agreement either on what behaviors constitute an effective teacher or how those behaviors can be evaluated.

Various agencies and institutions attempt to respond to the problem, however. State departments of education set up standards for teacher certification which supposedly will result in a competent teacher. Usually requirements are stated in terms of the completion of courses or credit hours, and include a supervised directed teaching. Some professional organizations also issue teaching certificates. For example, the Association of Educators of the Visually Handicapped

has a long history of issuing certificates for teachers of the visually handicapped.

Assessing teacher competence through an inspection of college/university transcripts that list courses completed, including supervised directed teaching, does not really assess competency nor does it give a prospective employer or the general public any assurance of competency. Thus, various groups have attempted to propose alternatives or supplements to state certification. Most of these efforts have been initiated and completed by professional organizations, or regional and national accrediting agencies. Their activities are frequently directed toward assessing actual performance and have become known as Performance Based Teacher Education (PBTE) or Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE). This competency approach to teacher education, therefore, results from an attempt to define good teaching and use that information to assess how well one teaches. It is based on the assumption that if we know what expert teachers do or are like, we can teach beginners to become like them.

There has been increasing interest in CBTE during the last ten years particularly in special education and education for the visually handicappped. The purpose of this paper is to review some of the activities related to CBTE in regular, special education and education of the visually handicappped in order to determine current status of the field, identify major issues and problems, and suggest problem solution.

Regular Education

Background

The relationship between teacher characteristics and teaching effectiveness has been the subject of research for half a century with rather disappointing results, that is, no consistent relationship has been demonstrated between any

characteristic and teaching effectiveness (Heath and Nielson, 1974). Although pupil achievement is suggested as a better measure of teaching competency (McNeil & Popham, 1973), the literature does not support a significant relationship between these two variables (Heath & Nielson, 1974). Heath and Nielson attribute the development of performance or competency based teacher education to this lack of useful outcomes in any research on the relationship between teacher characteristics and student achievement. Thus far, little research has been done relating CBTE to educational outcomes such as pupil achievement. This has not inhibited the flow of literature describing CBTE, however, nor its relatively widespread adoption in teacher education institutions and by state departments of education for certification purposes.

Major areas of competence typically targeted for CBTE include: (a) substantive knowledge of the content in the curriculum, teaching methods, and child development; (b) performance skills and strategies; and (c) attitudes toward children, teaching, and learning (McDonald, 1978). Specific competencies in one or more of these areas may be as numerous as several hundred.

When asked, most teacher educators will probably respond that their preparation programs are competency-based. However, further investigation usually reveals that "competency-based" means that lists of competencies have been developed by the faculty frequently with little or no input from the field. Often the competency statements are derived from the objectives listed in outlines of currently available courses. Mastery of the competencies is usually assessed through the typical procedures used for college courses: term papers, essay and objective tests; preparation of case studies; and other paper and pencil activities. The supervision of practica which should form the capstone for competence demonstration is usually assigned to other faculty or doctoral students so that those actually teaching the theory or content of the curriculum are separated from those supervising the practical application. Fuzzy lines of

communication exist between theory taught in the college/university and practice in the field.

When assessment procedures for performance at the practicum site exist, they are usually check-lists with little or no information about how the rater should arrive at a decision of whether or not the student has the competency. Thus, the ratings tend to be highly subjective and the potential exists for variation between raters. Critical areas of competency, such as attitudes toward the learner and interpersonal relationships, are usually absent from such ratings.

Problem Areas

Several problems with CBTE relative to regular education are mentioned in the literature. There is a general tendency to ignore the impact of the content of what is to be taught and the differences among the who being taught (Heath & Nielson, 1974). Competency lists developed often do not address these issues. Competencies to be developed may be as numerous as 300 on the mistaken assumption that the whole is equal to the sum of these many individual parts (Pottinger, 1978). There are problems in arriving at a consensus about the competencies themselves especially when state departments of education, administrators, supervisors, teacher educators, parents and students themselves have differing ideas about an effective teacher. Finally, the assessment of the competencies presents a challenge that is only partially met at the present time (cf. Shearron, 1978).

It is probably because of these problems that, after the flurry of interest in the late 1960s and the 1970s when elaborate and extensive lists of competencies were developed, interest in CBTE in regular education seems to have waned. From a survey of current literature today there appears to be a general mood of: where do we go next?

Special Education

Background

Special education has had a continuing interest in the CBTE movement. The early study of Mackie and Dunn in the 1950s are illustrative of these efforts. This study, conducted by the U.S. Office of Education on the Qualification and Preparation of Teachers of Exceptional Children resulted in the publication of the results of 13 separate studies devoted to different categorical areas.

The purpose of the study was to define the qualifications, distinctive competencies, and specialized preparation needed by teachers of handicapped and gifted pupils. Data were gathered from the field from teachers actively engaged in teaching handicapped and gifted, from directors and supervisors, and from college instructors. Committees were formed of professionals in the field who then prepared position papers describing the desired competencies. Finally the reports were discussed in conferences prior to publication (Mackie & Dunn, 1958). This study made a monumental contribution to the field of special education. It was unique in its extensive use of input from the field with more than 2,500 persons contributing to the project.

From 1960 to 1965 the Council for Exceptional Children built on the results of the previous study through its project on professional standards. Professional standards was the theme selected for the 1961 annual convention. After the convention, the Professional Standards Committee of CEC arranged for the development of position papers in various areas of exceptionality for discussion at the 1963 convention. The major recommendation from this experience was the initiation of a two year project with the following objectives:

> "analysis of previous efforts to draft professional standards; development of standards that would be useful in accreditation of professional education programs, certification of personnel, and specifications for employment; recommendations for communicating the standards to appropriate organizations; and determination of

ways in which CEC and other groups might apply and further develop professional standards as necessary (CEC, n.d., p. 85).

The project included the preparation of 11 working papers, one for each area of special education. These papers were circulated to knowledgeable professionals and revisions made based on their comments. In 1965, 125 participants attended a national conference to discuss general issues and to participate in working group sessions to discuss the working papers. This national conference was followed by four regional conferences modeled on the same plan in order to secure additional input from the field. Finally, in early 1966 the Professional Standards Committee met to prepare the final document (CEC, n.d.).

This document includes standards for three general areas: teacher education programs; administration and supervision and doctoral programs; and for seven categorical areas: behavioral disorders, deaf and hard of hearing, gifted, mentally retarded, physically handicapped, speech and hearing, and visually handicapped.

Numerous developments in the field of special education in the 1960s and early 1970s, particularly the trend toward a noncategorical approach, stimulated the Council for Exceptional Children to conduct a follow-up project with the following objectives:

1. To revise Professional Standards for Personnel in the Education of Exceptional Children published by the Council for Exceptional Children in 1966. This revision should reflect the best present thinking and consensus of opinions in the field. These guidelines will consider paraprofessional, undergraduate, and graduate levels of prepration and performance thus allowing for a continuum which establishes career advancement depending only upon an individual's potential and competency.

2. To involve persons in all areas of special education in a process which will afford an opportunity to fully discuss concepts, issues, and problems in the field that relates to professional competencies and preparation. This process of deliberation is important to the achievement of the first objective as well as to improvement in education throughout the nation.

3. To establish criteria for evaluating the professional guidelines. These criteria would consider the knowledge, skills, and attitudes implied by the guidelines.

> 4. To establish an iterative process for continued revision of these professional guidelines. Such a process would provide continuing up-to-date versions of the guidelines which reflect the latest applicable knowledge. Important to the continued revisions would be the empirical data obtained from the evaluation of the guidelines.
>
> (CEC, 1974, p. 3)

This project, developed during the noncategorical period in special education, resulted in a very general statement of standards or "guidelines," the term preferred by the project personnel. The document, therefore, was not found to be useful to those interested in the competencies of teachers for specific categorical areas. It is more useful as a set of ethical standards to guide professionals who work with exceptional children and as program standards for such accrediting agencies as NCATE.

Several developments related to CATE during the 1970s should be noted. In a special project funded by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, now the Office of Special Education, the Department of Special Education at the University of Missouri has engaged in developing a competency based training program for curriculum consultants beginning in 1970. The project included the identification of competencies for curriculum consultants through extensive input from the field and the development of modules to teach the competencies for use in inservice and preservice education (Altman & Meyen, 1974).

Exclusive of activities in the field for the visually handicapped, some special educators have focused on competencies for teachers of categorical groups: the brain injured (Cruickshank, 1966); emotionally disturbed (Bullock & Whelan, 1971); mentally retarded (Berdine & Kelly, 1977); profoundly retarded/multiply handicapped (Billingsley & Allen, 1980).

Difficulties in assessing teacher competence through pupil achievement were discussed in a previous section. In addition, the problem of using the directed teaching experience as a means of assessing competence was also noted.

Berdine, et al. (1978) propose a system for verifying student teacher competence and providing feedback on the total CBTE program. The system involves supervising teacher and university supervisor rating the student teacher over an eight week period on 105 competencies in five areas: planning and preparation for instruction, classroom management, professional adequacy, personal characteristics, and instructional/subject areas. The evaluation of the system is continuing.

With recent legislation the role of the special education teacher has changed. Many of the competencies that were considered special education specific flow over and become a part of those needed by the regular classroom teacher. Audrey Anderson (1979) consolidated lists of competencies identified by five different constituencies affected by P.L. 94-142: competencies included in the 33 page pamphlet of competencies identified by the Dean's Grant; six competency areas developed in the Redden and Blackhurst study of regular elementary teachers; two check-lists of 41 items compiled by teacher educators in the Haisley Gilbert study; the competencies identified by special educators in the Mann study, and the competencies identified by local and state education agencies. After compiling and cross tabulating these lists agreement in the following areas was noted:

Knowledge of the law--federal and state

- least restrictive environment
- IEPs
- due process

Nature of mainstreaming

Characteristics of exceptional children

Individualization of instruction

- assessment of student needs
- learning styles
- diagnosis-prescription
- adapation of curriculum
- evaluation

Educational, physical, social, emotional development

Behavioral management

Human relations

communication skills (peers, parents and pupils)
attitudes

Resource and support systems

utilizing resource personnel (special education personnel, aides, tutors, parents)

Classroom organization (establishing environment)

physical environment
learning environment

(Anderson, 1979)

Problem Areas and Current Status

The problem areas noted in the section under general education are likewise present in special education in addition to ones unique to the field.

There is probably a lesser issue in special education about the "what" and the "who" compared with general education. The new roles resulting from the mainstreaming movement require special educators to function to a greater extent as consultants and resource teachers. Thus, the "what," or curriculum content, is generally determined by the regular educator. The special educational needs of particular categories, however, such as instruction in speech reading for the hard of hearing, remain the responsibility of the special educator. Likewise, the "who" in special education is more clearly defined. The critical variable is the popularity of the noncategorical or generalist approach which may result in a lack of attention to specialized educational needs of specific types of exceptional children. Concern about this approach is no longer unique to professionals in low incidence areas but is now being expressed by those in mental impairment, learning disabilities, and emotional impairment. This need points to the importance of returning to the identification of teacher competencies by categorical areas.

The problem of consensus regarding competencies is probably of lesser importance in special education because of the smaller number of teacher training

programs and relatively fewer professionals in the field. It would appear that special educators involved in the CBTE movement are working to include input from the field (cf. Altman & Meyen, 1974). Assessment of competencies likewise seems to be receiving attention (cf. Berdine, et al., 1978).

In spite of the attention and interest in CBTE by special educators, there are continuing problems mentioned in the literature relative to their validity, their generalizability across more than one university program, and their measurement or assessment (cf. Shores, et al., 1973).

Issues around continuing education are especially critical in special education. In the past, it was generally accepted that upon completion of one's formal education, the person is competent to begin teaching. However, it is increasingly evident that the teacher must continue to develop his/her professional skills throughout his/her career. The field of special education is developing so rapidly that teachers must work diligently to keep up with new information and to develop needed skills to meet the challenge of change. Several models have been proposed for designing a professional development program but the barriers to their success include how they should be financed and how professionals can be enticed to participate.

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) mandated by P.L. 94-142 is increasingly recognized as a vehicle for professional development (Duncan, 1980). For some categorical groups, especially low incidence, the CSPD must be implemented on a state-wide level. This has been attempted by the state of Oregon (Evan, 1980) and to meet manpower planning needs on a state-wide level in Massachusetts (Gilles, 1980). With shrinking financial resources, the use of the CSPD may be the most effective means of conducting programs in professional development.

In summary, it would appear that greater attention is being given to CBTE in special education than in regular education. The influence of federal funding

with the accompanying mandate for program evaluation probably accounts in part for this difference.

In the following section we review specifically what is happening with competency based education in the field for the visually handicapped

Education for the Visually Handicapped

Background

Perhaps one of the earliest list of needs for skills or competencies for teachers of the visually handicapped was developed in 1918 by the American Association of Instructors of the Blind. Trends in the field that had an impact on teacher competencies were identified:

> 1. The adoption of a Uniform Type for the blind of the English speaking world.
>
> 2. The gradual elimination of pupils of very low mentality from our schools.
>
> 3. The introduction of sight-saving classes for the partially blind in institutions for the blind and in public schools.
>
> 4. The regular and scientific training of our girls in homemaking.
>
> 5. The systematic physical training given our pupils in the gymnasium, the swimming pool and on the athletic field, the holding of competitive athletic meets which has done much to promote self-confidence and school pride.
>
> 6. The education of the blind with the seeing in high schools and universities, as well as in special classes for the blind in public schools.
>
> 7. The introduction of new courses of study which are more elastic and which give equal opportunity for the development of the bright as well as the dull child.
>
> 8. The establishment of separate kindergartens for the young blind.
>
> 9. Greater attention to vocational work, especially for those of lower mentality.
>
> (Abel, 1969)

Some years later, Merry (1933) reported in his book some of

the qualifications which experienced educators of the blind believe that ideal teachers should possess. Four general qualifications were suggested: (1) a four-year high school course or equivalent; (2) three or four years of normal training for elementary teachers and high school teachers, respectively; (3) for nonacademic subjects three or four years of special training; and (4) special preparation for teaching blind children through courses in the history of education of the blind and on psychological and educational problems of blindness.

In 1955, as part of the nation-wide study on the Qualification and Preparation of Teachers of Exceptional Children, the competency committee on the blind developed a list of 82 competencies arranged in these groupings:

Knowledge of medical factors including social and psychological implications;

Understanding and use of reading and writing equipment:

Selection and use of aids and appliances;

Curriculum adaptation and program adjustment; and

Knowledge and ability to work with related resources.

Teachers rating the 82 competencies included 30 in the "very important" category; 47 as "important"; and 4 as "less important." It is of interest to list these four (Mackie & Dunn, 1958, p. 29):

The history of education of the blind;

The basic theory of light;

Methods of testing vision, and the various instruments used for this purpose; and

Methods of testing hearing, and the various instruments used for this purpose.

This study also included a comparison of day and residential school ratings of the competencies. While there was general agreement between the two groups

on most items, the ones on which opinions differed significantly were those related to the expanded role of the day school teacher, such as, "Knowledge of the available resources in the community."

The CEC study (n.d.) from the early 1960s enumerated the competencies in terms of what the preparation program should include. There were nine broad areas:

1. The influence upon children of various types and degrees of visual impairments (for example, social and emotional characteristics of visually handicapped children, significance for education).

2. The educational implications of eye conditions (for example, anatomy and physiology of the eye, functional implications of common visual impairments).

3. Identification and placement of visually handicapped children (for example, understanding of the teacher's role in screening, educational planning, and school programming).

4. Educational procedures for children who are visually handicapped (for example, special instructional techniques, materials preparation, program planning, adaptations, and modifications).

5. The teaching of communication skills (for example, reading and writing by means of braille and/or print, typing, and listening skill development).

6. Orientation, mobility, and daily living skills (theory and practicum experience in teaching skills for coping with the environment).

7. Educational appraisal and remedial techniques in the basic skill subjects (theory and practicum experience in teaching and appraising children with learning problems, remedial reading, remedial arithmetic, etc.).

8. Practicum experiences with visually handicapped children (including directed observation, demonstration, participation, supervised teaching, and individual case studies of visually handicapped children).

9. Information on local, state, and national resources for the education and assistance of children who are visually handicapped.

As mentioned in the previous section, the later CEC study (1974) was non-categorical and emphasized the general or core content in the preparation of special education teachers.

Coinciding with the Mackie and Dunn study, the American Foundation for the

Blind (AFB) began looking at a functional, competency based teacher education program. Thus from the mid-fifties through the early sixties several lists of competencies for teachers of the visually impaired were generated. Some lists assumed the teacher would be prepared for all the various roles, while others concentrated on a specific role such as itinerant teacher, resource teacher, or teacher consultant.

Beginning in 1973 AFB once again took up the task of competency based education by examining whether the preparation for special teachers has ever been analyzed in relation to actual tasks performed. Keeping in mind that the role of the teacher of the visually handicapped had to be functionally redefined, AFB initiated and sponsored the first in a series of six meetings with representatives from the 22 colleges/universities offering preparation programs for teachers of the visually handicapped. The product of these work sessions was a draft edition of the competencies which these teacher educators agreed were essential for teachers of the visually handicapped. The competencies were under 12 goal areas reflecting 7 teaching activities: assessment and evaluation, educational instructional strategies, guidance and counseling, administration and supervision, media and technology, school-community relations, and research (Spungin, 1977).

GOAL 1.0 Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of normal and atypical developmental patterns in visually handicapped learners.

GOAL 2.0 Teacher will demonstrate the ability to assess visually handicapped learners using a variety of informal and formal procedures.

GOAL 3.0 Teacher will demonstrate the ability to select, design and/or modify specialized curricula for visually handicapped learners.

GOAL 4.0 Teacher will demonstrate proficiency in the operation of media and devices necessary for the education of the visually handicapped learner.

GOAL 5.0 Teacher will utilize instructional strategies to facilitate learning in visually handicapped children.

GOAL 6.0 Teacher can effectively utilize instructional materials, media, devices, aids, etc. appropriate to the individual needs of visually handicapped children.

GOAL 7.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to identify and provide appropriate counseling and guidance services to visually handicapped learners, and significant others.

GOAL 8.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to utilize local, state and national resources to assist in the delivery of services to the visually handicapped learner.

GOAL 9.0 Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of and opportunity for research with visually handicapped learner.

GOAL 10.0 Teacher will accept responsibilities of being a member of the teaching profession and will make a commitment to improve services for visually handicapped learners.

GOAL 11.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to administer and/or supervise programs for visually handicapped learners, including ancillary personnel, para-professionals, and volunteers.

GOAL 12.0 Teacher can demonstrate the ability to evaluate both instructional sequences and overall program effectiveness of various school programs and agencies serving visually handicapped learners.

The next step was to field test these competencies with teachers actually working with visually handicapped pupils in a variety of settings. The field testing had two major phases. Phase I had two objectives: to determine how the role and job function of teachers in the field were related to the training competencies and to compare the relationship between the competency ratings and variables related to the teachers, e.g., educational setting, training, students served and community size. Phase II studied the relationship between time spent on various activities and the competencies.

A questionnaire was sent to teachers in residential and day schools throughout the country. The survey requested teachers to rate the 82 competencies on a 5 point agree-disagree scale; to estimate the amount of time spent on the seven teaching activities; and to give demographic information about themselves and the setting in which they worked.

Results from the field-testing supported the observation made earlier that teachers of the visually handicapped perform a wide variety of roles in a wide variety of settings. Furthermore, some of the competencies deemed important by the teacher educators were not considered as essential by the teachers themselves. In general, results from this study identified a need for teacher educators to engage in ongoing evaluation of the competencies in light of the changing needs in the field. Details of this study are found in Spungin (1977).

The Michigan Project

In 1978, with funds awarded from the Office of Special Education, formerly the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, the University of Michigan initiated a three year project to improve the quality of services to visually handicapped pupils through improved teacher education programs. The mechanism to accomplish this goal was to continue group discussions on the evaluation and extension of the competencies.

Professional personnel in the 26 colleges/universities then preparing teachers for working with the approximately 45,000 visually handicapped children have an obligation to provide the best possible training for those teachers at the pre- and inservice levels regardless of the type of setting in which they work: teacher counselor, teacher consultant, resource room, special class, or residential school. In order to serve visually handicapped children effectively, teachers must have acquired the competencies generally accepted in the field at either the pre- or inservice level. To help teachers acquire the competencies, professional personnel in colleges/universities must arrive at some consensus about the importance of the competencies and about the necessary achievement indicators or mastery levels required for the competencies. The latter is a critical element because the success of competency based teacher education programs

is dependent on the quality of the instruments used to assess the competencies. Although the development of assessment instruments is difficult, it is not impossible. A major objective of this three year project is to expand the mastery task/achievement indicator portion of the competency document mentioned earlier. The end-product should be a companion volume to Spungin (1977) which can be utilized by college/university professional personnel in their training programs; by state vision consultants in planning and implementing programs of professional development for teachers of the visually handicapped; by residential school superintendents and state and local administrators in the selection and evaluation of teachers of the visually handicapped; and by state departments of education in reviewing and revising the current heterogeneous certification requirements. The end result should be more effective programs to meet the educational needs of visually handicapped children by increasing the level of competency of the teachers who work with them.

This project is completing its second year. During the year prior to the initiation of the project (1978-79), a Division for the Visually Handicapped workshop session at the Council for Exceptional Children meeting in Dallas was held. Attendance included about 25 teachers, administrators, doctoral students and university faculty members. The participants were divided into groups with each group assigned to review and react to the existing competency document. There was great interest expressed in the competency project particularly by administrators at this meeting. The feedback obtained during this session was used in the revision of the knowledge and skill statements.

In October 1979, a meeting of the 12 university faculty members who volunteered to work on this project was held in Louisville, Kentucky. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize plans for a work session held in Chicago in March 1980. During this session, the competencies were revised and a draft of mastery

tasks was developed. The original 12 goals were collapsed into 10 and some knowledge and skill statements were combined. The mastery task/achievement indicator section for all competencies was revised and greatly expanded to include more specific statements on how achievement of the competency can be measured.

The resulting draft now includes 71 competency statements under the following 10 goals:

1.0 Teacher Demonstrates Knowledge of Developmental Patterns in Visually Handicapped Learners

2.0 Teacher Will Demonstrate the Ability to Assess Visually Handicapped Learners Using a Variety of Informal and Formal Procedures

3.0 Teacher will Demonstrate the Ability to Select, Design and/or Modify Specialized Curricula for Visually Handicapped Learners with Varying Degrees of Visual Impairment and at all Developmental Levels

4.0 Teacher Will Demonstrate Proficiency in the Operation of Media and Devices Necessary for the Education of the Visually Handicapped Learner

5.0 Teacher Will Utilize Instructional Strategies to Facilitate Learning in Visually Handicapped Children

6.0 Teacher Can Effectively Utilize Instructional Materials, Media, Devices, Etc. Appropriate to the Individual Needs of Visually Handicapped Children

7.0 Teacher Will Demonstrate Ability to Identify and Provide Appropriate Counseling and Guidance Services to Visually Handicapped Learners and Significant Others

8.0 Teacher Will Demonstrate Ability to Utilize Local, State, and National Legislation, Policy, and Resources to Assist in the Delivery of Services to the Visually Handicapped Learner

9.0 Teacher Will Demonstrate Knowledge of and Need for Research with Visually Handicapped Learners

10.0 Teacher Will Accept Responsibilities of Being a Member of the Teaching Profession and Will Make a Commitment to Improve Services for Visually Handicapped Learners with Varying Degrees of Visual Loss and At All Developmental Levels

Using this draft, an instrument was developed to gather information. The participants in this pilot effort consisted of classroom teachers, resource teachers, teacher consultants, students, and a special education supervisor. Although the instrument was not very sophisticated, many interesting and useful pieces of information were obtained. The information that was gained is being used in the development of a new instrument to be used in the next phase of this project.

The next phase of the project consists of developing the modified questionnaire which will seek to prioritize the knowledge areas for beginning and experienced teacher; ascertain if and where the respondent obtained the competency; and determine the necessary level of proficiency of the mastery task for beginning and experienced teachers. The questionnaire will be sent to itinerant teachers, resource teachers, teacher consultants and classroom teachers from both residential and day school programs.

These instruments will be circulated by September 1981. It is currently projected that the end-product should be completed by December 1981.

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Problems and Issues in the Teacher Competency Movement: The University Perspective

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The development of this document, Competencies for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped, is a major milestone for our field. It is a versatile tool for teacher educators as well as an accountability measure for pre-service and in-service teachers, administrators and parents. Ultimately, it is a document which assures children, the consumers of services, that their education will be guided by teachers who have attained specific competencies.

Prior to adopting the competencies for teacher education programs there are several issues which need to be addressed. Only with thought and careful planning can we efficiently and responsibly utilize this document. I'd like to share a few of these issues with you, particularly those about which we have had much discussion at The University of Texas at Austin.

1. Determinations need to be made regarding the criteria for mastery tasks for different levels of instruction. Those skills which are to be acquired at the pre-service level will differ from those expected of masters level teachers with two to three years of experience. Given a limited number of semester hours with undergraduate students we need to develop priorities and delineate which competencies are to be taught. For graduate students entering our program we hope to develop professional growth documents, similar to IEP's which will include assessments (using the competencies) and short and long term objectives.

2. As we prepare teachers to work in a variety of settings with children at various levels of functioning, we must also develop priorities for different teacher roles. Knowledge of measures of assessment for severely handicapped-visually impaired infants may be less important than abacus instruction for a resource teacher of junior high in a large city. However, we must also keep in mind that the major model of service delivery in the country is the itinerant teacher who sees "all" children. The development of instructional modules around competencies will provide content with flexibility. Students will, therefore, be able to elect to take a specific number of modules in courses. Their subsequent teaching recommendations may indicate in which modules they have gained competencies.

3. We must use the competencies as building blocks with an end-product of a competent teacher. Just as we work with whole children so must we look at prospective teachers as people who will need to integrate skills; while teachers may gain competencies in coursework, the true assessment of skill and art come in the student teaching experience. And yet, many school districts, desperately in need of teachers of the visually handicapped, will hire graduating seniors one month into their student teaching practicum!

4. We must accept the limits of these competencies in program development. They help us to measure such abilities as developing IEP's from written case studies and the demonstration of skill in the use of equipment. However, there are no measures for such qualities in teachers as the ability to establish rapport. So too, teacher educators in special education should be interested in the philosophy being developed by their pre-service teachers. Will they see themselves only as "do-gooders for the handicapped", or will they utilize their skills in order to help children learn how to help

themselves? A "healthy" attitude in conjunction with the competencies will lead to a teacher's success.

5. In a time when categorical funding is in jeopardy, teacher education programs as well as SEA's, LEA's and parents will need all the documentation available to demonstrate the need for teachers who have unique disability-specific competencies. Only with well trained teachers of the visually handicapped, will we be able to provide an appropriate education for children who have visual handicaps.

This morning we honored Georgie Lee Abel, a professor under whom I was priviledged to study. She discussed many milestones in our field. We hope that she and the many other people who worked vigorously to develop our field will see the results of these competencies in a better quality of service for children who are visually handicapped.

Competencies for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped:

Background, Issues and Current Developments

Reaction: The State Education Consultant Perspective

Lynne Albright

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Scholl and Holman have provided us with considerable amusement with lists of 'competencies' from the nineteenth century. I began to wonder, in this rapidly changing society of the late twentieth century, how long it will be before the current lists of competencies provide similar entertainment for future generations of educators. I then indulged in a bit of fantasy and generated a list for the future - competencies that might be required for the teacher of the visually handicapped in the twenty-first century. A partial list might include:

1. Teacher will demonstrate the ability to develop programs for computers, trouble shoot and make simple repairs.
2. Teacher will demonstrate a knowledge of optics and the ability to utilize complex optical systems.
3. Teacher will demonstrate the ability to negotiate and be politically effective.

And in our times of energy crunch and drought .....

4. Teacher will bring the daily ration of 'a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal'.

I am sure that each of you could make your lists for the future and they would vary depending upon your basic philosophy of education and your view of society's directions. I raise the issue of the future because of the need addressed in the paper for continual revision of competencies to reflect the changing needs in the field.

We, in education, are probably facing a period of dramatic and rapid change which will have a significant impact on the role of the teacher of the visually handicapped. My remarks reflect upon current events in my own state but I am sure that you can all relate to the trends. When school board members begin to attend placement team meetings; when handicapped children become a political football between the House and the Senate; and when Special Education becomes the issue used by a Senator to launch a campaign for Governor - Special Education will never be the same. No longer will the necessity of a teacher for the visually handicapped be assumed. No longer will it be assumed that a teacher of the visually handicapped is the only person who can provide the services and no longer will it be accepted that the teacher of the visually handicapped knows best what services should be provided.

We must be able to present authoritative information regarding the competencies of service providers as well as present a means to measure and evaluate performance. This information will be required by legislators determining funds, State Boards developing policy, local boards making decisions about programs, and administrators employing teachers. At each level, we will be asked for means to determine effectiveness and we must have a mechanism that will be related to those goals we see as most important. These competencies will provide us with documentation we will need in our continuing efforts to present the need for programs for the visually handicapped students.

There is also a critical role for competencies in generating potential research linking desired outcomes with competencies. In future years, we will undoubtedly have to demonstrate such relationships quite clearly and precisely.

In comparing the drafted goal statements with those from the early part of the century, or even with those developed in the sixties, the clear trend is seen. The teacher of the visually handicapped has shifted from the provider of the total education program and curriculum to the teacher with specialized

expertise who functions as a resource and support to the primary providers of the educational program. Some aspects of that role and necessary concomitant skills appear to be missing in the ten goal statements. The teacher of the visually handicapped increasingly is the consultant, the manager, the supervisor and trainer of para-professionals and the educator of the professionals. These skills have generally been reserved for the administrator and not the teacher but they are roles that increasingly, teachers of the visually handicapped are assuming. Teachers say, "I learned about children and education and visual handicaps, and that is basic. But I spend a large portion of my time and energy working with adults in an educational and consulting role and I didn't learn how to do that." I would urge that these areas of expertise be considered for the future drafts of competencies.

I feel that the development of these competencies and the projected companion materials, including the mastery levels, will be a significant contribution to the field and will prove to be a timely contribution. I would echo the thoughts of Georgia Lee Abel in saying that we need more definitive writings to help us in explaining our field. Hopefully, the document will give state education consultants and administrators of regional and local programs necessary material to substantiate the needs for trained personnel and to set standards for programs and certification. The mastery levels will provide us with information in planning for professional development, as well as the means for measuring their effectiveness. The potential for eventual researched links between specific competencies and outcomes will provide improved accountability for programs. The competencies will certainly benefit the state certification programs, especially where competency-based-certification options exist.

I will admit that for several years I have been listening to talk about competencies for teachers of the visually handicapped, and I had a general idea of the

activities described today. I even completed some of those questionnaires distributed by various persons. Not until recently did I recognize the critical importance of these materials to our efforts to continue to assure quality education for visually handicapped students.